BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS

Ministry of
Management Services

Infoline

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- **Home builders off to a slow start in January**
- **Motor vehicle sales were soft in December, but 2002 was a good year for car dealers**
- **Chinese, Punjabi & Spanish the most common "other" languages spoken at work in Vancouver**

Census 2001

- **Seven percent of British Columbians use more than one language in their workplace.** Bi- or multi-lingual workplaces are most common for Francophones (29%) and allophones (23%)those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. Only 2% of British Columbians who first learned to speak English use more than one language in their workplace. Fifteen percent of all workers in Canada speak at least two languages on the job. *Source: 2001 Census, Catalogue 96F0030XIE2001011*

- **Three out of 10 workers in BC whose mother tongue is neither English nor French use their first language at work–16%, most of the time, and 14%, regularly.** More than half (53%) of the 145,000 workers in Vancouver who first learned to speak Chinese use it in their workplace: 33% most, and 20% some, of the time. About 36% of Punjabi-speaking workers in Vancouver, and 26% of those who speak Spanish, use their mother tongue on the job. *Source: 2001 Census, Catalogue 96F0030XIE2001011*

The Economy

- **Housing starts in the province fell again in January, dropping 18.4% (seasonally adjusted) after posting a 7.9% decline at the end of last year.** Starts were down across the country (-8.7%), falling in all but three of the provinces. *Source: CMHC*

- **The cost of new housing in BC's two biggest cities continued to climb in December.** The new housing price index was up 2.0% (year-over-year) in Vancouver, and 5.9% in Victoria, where prices for both land (+4.0%) and housing (+8.1%) rose substantially. In the Vancouver area, house prices were higher (+3.1%) but the cost of land was virtually unchanged (+0.2%) from November.

  For the first time since 1993, the annual average cost of new housing in both Vancouver (+2.5%) and Victoria (+3.6%) increased substantially. New housing prices had declined steadily from 1994 to 2000, but inched up in 2001 as the housing market started to emerge from a long downturn. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Department store sales in BC and the north stalled (+0.0%, seasonally adjusted) in December.** Stores across the country saw disappointing results in the pre-Christmas rush, with sales falling in five regions. Canadian sales were down 0.3% from November.

  Despite weakness late in the year, department stores in BC and the north had a relatively good year in 2002, chalking up a 3.4% annual increase. However, this fell far short of gains in the rest of the country, where sales advanced at rates ranging from 3.8% in Manitoba to just over 10% on the east coast. Canadian sales were up 6.0% in 2002.
  Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats

- **New vehicle sales in BC and the north edged up 1.0% (seasonally adjusted) in December, after slipping 3.7% in the previous month.** The relatively weak growth in BC and Alberta (+1.7%) fell far short of a 6.3% increase at the national level. Sales were up in every province except PEI.

  2002 was the best year for car dealerships in BC (and the north) since 1997, as 195,134 (+13.1%) new motor vehicles were driven away by consumers. Overseas-manufactured vehicles were hot sellers (+24.3%). Sales of North American-made cars, trucks and vans, which have the lion's share (77%) of the market, were up a more moderate 10.1%.

Report Mother tongue and home language

Did you know...

In 2002, there was only 1 report of an alleged abduction (or direct contact with aliens) in Canada. Close encounters peaked in 1997, when 8 abductions/contacts were reported.

Trucks (98,419) remain more popular than cars (96,715), but the gap is narrowing. Canadian vehicle sales improved 8.5% during 2002. BC and Manitoba (+13.9%) posted the strongest gains, but sales were up in every province. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Restaurant, caterer and tavern receipts in the province slipped 1.4% (seasonally adjusted) in December, as consumers reined in their spending at food service establishments (-1.5%).** Drinking places saw their business increase 1.0% in December.

  Total annual receipts fell 1.3% in 2002, largely because spending at taverns dropped off sharply (-14.5%), continuing a four-year-long downturn. Restaurants and caterers fared better, but still saw receipts edge down 0.4% last year. Total Canadian receipts were up 2.9%. *Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats*

Retirement Income

- **Benefits from Canadian retirement income programs accounted for three-quarters of the total income of seniors (aged 65 and over) in 1999.** At the beginning of the decade, these programs represented under just two-thirds of their income. The increase was largely due to the growing importance of private pension programs such as RRSPs and Registered Pension Plans. These accounted for 29% of seniors' income in 1999, compared to 18% in 1990. Fifty-five percent of seniors received private pension income in 1999. The comparable figure in 1990 was 38%.

  Most (85%, up from 72% in 1990) older Canadians received CPP benefits in 1999. Old Age Security benefits, which go to 98% of the senior population, contributed 27% of their total income in 1999, down from 30% at the beginning of the decade.

  Men (67%) were more likely than women (46%) to have income from private pension plans in 1999. They were also more likely to be eligible for CPP benefits. The gap is narrowing as more of the women who joined the workforce in the mid-20th century are reaching retirement age. *Source: SC, The Daily*

Smoking & Health

- **The younger people are when they become daily smokers, the sooner they are likely to be diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, or rheumatoid arthritis.** In 2000/01, the cumulative incidence of having at least one of the three diseases was highest among daily smokers who picked up the habit in adolescence. By age 60, 32% of men who started smoking daily when they were 13-17 had one of these diseases. This compares to 24% of those who started later (18-22) and 14% of men who had never smoked. Women appear to be more susceptible than men to these diseases. The percentages were higher in all groups: 41% for smokers who started in their teens, 29% for those who began as young adults, and 17% for women who never smoked.

  Source: SC, The Daily

High in the Sky?

- **More mysterious objects were observed in the skies of British Columbia last year, with 176 UFO sightings reported (53 more than in 2001), the highest number in over a decade.** The skies over northern BC were particularly busy, with 25 sightings in Terrace and 24 in Houston. Another 31 UFO sightings were reported in Vancouver, more than in any other urban area except Toronto (34). Vancouver, Terrace and Houston were ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th among Canadian cities for UFO sightings.

  The most mundane explanation for all the activity in the BC skies is a well-publicized UFO hotline that makes it easy to report sightings when they occur. It is also possible that BC residents are just more susceptible to seeing things high in the sky. Or, perhaps, British Columbians are particularly fascinating to alien observers. Whatever the reason, BC remains the UFO capital of Canada, with a third of the UFO sightings in Canada last year. Eighty-seven of the 483 UFOs reported in Canada last year are still unexplained.

  Source: The 2002 Canadian UFO Survey

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Infoline Report

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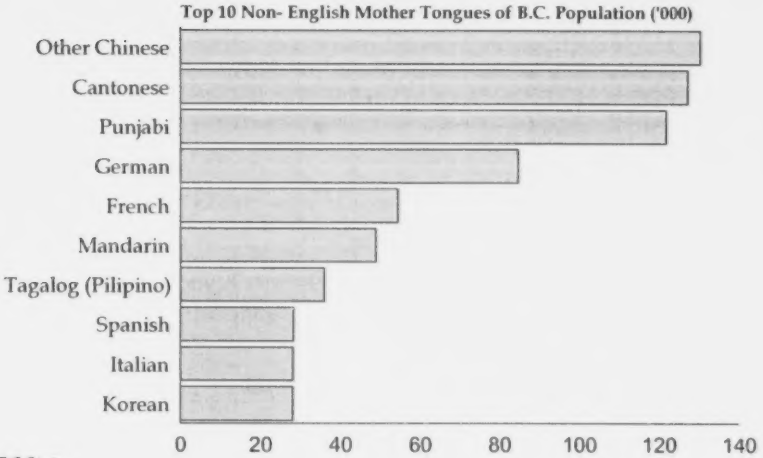
Mother Tongue and Home Language

In 2001, one in every four British Columbians reported a single mother tongue other than English. . .



BC Stats

Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the Census. In 2001, about seventy-five per cent of the B.C. population reported English as their mother tongue, indicating a decline from the 76.5 per cent reported five years ago in the 1996 Census. French was reported by 1.4 per cent of the province's population as their mother tongue. Nationally, 58.5 per cent of the Canadian population reported English and 22.6 per cent reported French as their mother tongue. Including English and French, there were a total of 125 languages tabulated in the 2001 Census for mother tongues. There were 1.3 per cent of the B.C. population (or 48,750 persons) who reported more than one mother tongue (multiple responses).

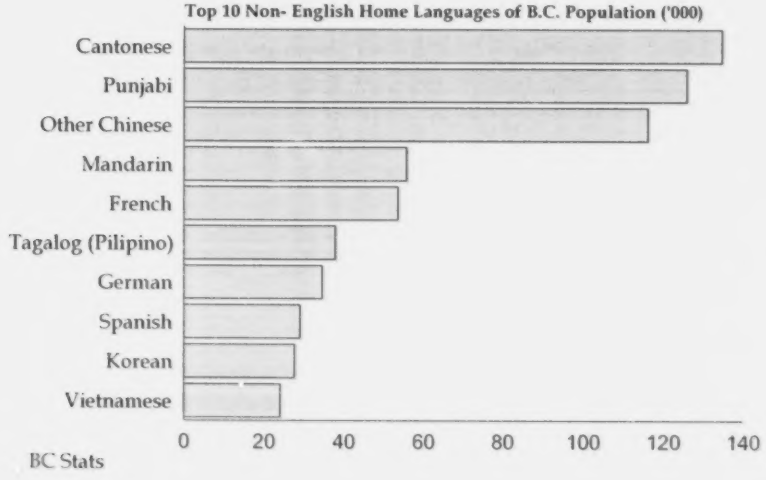
After English, Chinese was the second most spoken mother tongue. A total of 307,995 persons in the province reported having a Chinese mother tongue in 2001. This represented 32.8 per cent of the B.C. population with a non-official mother tongue, or 8.0 per cent of all British Columbians who reported a single mother tongue. This ratio is high for B.C. when compared to the 2.9 per cent with Chinese mother tongue in the overall population of Canada. Also, the population with a Chinese mother tongue has been growing significantly over the last two census periods. The number from the 1996 Census was 252,405 persons, indicating an increase of 22.0 per over the five years between 1996 and 2001. The majority of the Chinese speaking population lived in the Lower Mainland. In 2001, 95.2 per cent of the people who had a Chinese mother tongue lived in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. The major Chinese dialects spoken were Cantonese and Mandarin, representing 41.3 per cent and 15.9 per cent of all reported Chinese mother tongues, respectively.

Punjabi and German were the other major mother tongues spoken in British Columbia. They respectively accounted for 13.0 per cent and 9.0 per cent of the province's population having a non-official mother tongue. The other common mother tongues included Tagalog, Spanish, Italian, Korean, Dutch, Vietnamese and Persian.

While European languages were still the dominating mother tongues in the province, the number of people having an Asian mother tongue has been increasing due to the high influx of Asian immigrants over the last two decades. Over the five years from 1997 to 2001, about three in every four immigrants who arrived in the province were from Asia, and more than 150,000 Asian immigrants had landed in B.C. during that period. A very high proportion of these recent immigrants having a non-English mother tongue had no knowledge of English or French at the time of the Census. For example, 30.5 per cent of the population with a Chinese tongue reported not knowing either English or French. Overall, there were 2.7 per cent of British Columbians who could not speak, write or understand either official language in 2001.

Home language is the language a person speaks at home most of the time. Home language may or may not be a person's mother tongue. A majority of the most common non-official home languages were Asian languages. Cantonese and Punjabi, apart from English, were the top two most spoken languages at home. In 2001, 134,670 persons spoke Cantonese and 125,920 spoke Punjabi at home.

Some people speak more than one language at home and a very high proportion of the multilingual population spoke English and their non-English mother tongue at home. On the other hand, there were people who speak only their mother tongue at home. For example, in 2001, more than half of the Cantonese speaking people spoke only Cantonese at home. Population who reported a European home language tended to speak more than one language at home and were relatively less likely to speak only their mother tongue at home.



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B.C. Population by Mother Tongue—2001 Census

English	2,825,780	Hebrew	810
Chinese, n.o.s.	130,330	Amharic	750
Cantonese	127,160	Sinhalese	725
Punjabi	121,740	Sino-Tibetan languages, n.i.e.	640
German	84,605	Shuswap	630
French	54,400	Kurdish	620
Mandarin	48,880	Indo-Iranian languages, n.i.e.	615
Tagalog (Pilipino)	35,940	Latvian (Lettish)	595
Spanish	28,235	Yiddish	565
Italian	28,165	Nishga	505
Korean	28,105	Malayalam	495
Dutch	26,745	Bantu languages, n.i.e.	440
Vietnamese	23,220	Frisian	430
Persian (Farsi)	21,290	Flemish	420
Hindi	20,295	Gaelic languages	420
Japanese	17,900	Niger-Congo languages, n.i.e.	410
Polish	17,320	Nootka	405
Russian	14,920	Athapaskan languages, n.i.e.	395
Portuguese	14,155	Thompson (Ntlakapamux)	390
Ukrainian	13,605	Icelandic	380
Hungarian	10,775	Lithuanian	345
Croatian	8,520	Welsh	345
Greek	6,685	Tsimshian	340
Danish	6,565	Telugu	330
Arabic	6,235	Twi	320
Gujarati	6,200	Turkic languages, n.i.e.	300
Malayo-Polynesian lang., n.i.e.	5,885	Creoles	295
Czech	5,835	Ojibway	285
Romanian	5,170	African languages, n.i.e.	275
Finnish	5,120	Aboriginal languages, n.i.e.	250
Serbian	4,670	Maltese	235
Urdu	4,410	Pashto	235
Norwegian	3,850	Semitic languages, n.i.e.	235
Serbo-Croatian	3,305	Swahili	235
Swedish	3,265	Tigringa	230
Slovak	2,820	Marathi	210
Malay-Bahasa	2,265	Konkani	155
Tamil	2,250	Haida	145
Slavic languages, n.i.e.	1,810	Romance languages, n.i.e.	145
Sindhi	1,775	Kutenai	125
Other languages	1,630	Macedonian	110
Germanic languages, n.i.e.	1,625	South Slave	100
Hakka	1,625	Austro-Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	90
Salish languages, n.i.e.	1,555	Dene	70
Turkish	1,505	Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	55
Khmer (Cambodian)	1,360	Byelorussian	55
Slovenian	1,335	Inuktitut (Eskimo)	50
Somali	1,315	Kannada	50
Carrier	1,235	Algonquian languages, n.i.e.	35
Thai	1,235	Blackfoot	35
Estonian	1,190	Dakota/Sioux	25
Cree	1,180	Chipewyan	20
Bengali	1,165	Dogrib	20
Lao	1,125	Iroquoian languages, n.i.e.	15
Bulgarian	910	Kutchin-Gwich'in (Loucheux)	10
Gitksan	905	Malecite	10
Armenian	900	Micmac	10
Wakashan languages, n.i.e.	865	Mohawk	10
Chilcotin	810	Tlingit	10

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census
Note: n.i.e. = Not Included Elsewhere ; n.o.s. = Not Otherwise Specified

Infoline

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/02	% change on one year ago
BC	4,151.0	0.9
Canada	31,485.6	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	2001 Revised	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	130,859	1.2
GDP *($ 1997 millions)*	123,912	-0.2
GDP *($ 1997 per Capita)*	30,252	-1.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1997 per Capita)*	19,513	1.2
TRADE ($ millions, seasonally adjusted)		% change on prev. month
Manufacturing Shipments - Nov	2,899	-0.7
Merchandise Exports - Nov	2,298	-5.4
Retail Sales - Nov	3,391	0.0
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		12-month avg
(all items - 1992=100)	Dec '02	% change
BC	118.8	2.3
Canada	120.4	2.2
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Jan '03	prev. month
Labour Force - BC	2,167	-0.4
Employed - BC	1,990	-0.2
Unemployed - BC	177	-2.9
		Dec '02
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.2	8.4
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.4	7.5
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 12/03	Feb 13/02
Prime Business Rate	4.50	3.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	4.90	4.55
- 5 year	6.60	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 12/03	Feb 13/02
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5287	1.5906
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6539	0.6287
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Jan '03	one year ago
BC	679.52	3.6
Canada	658.15	2.2

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

Released this week by BC STATS

- Labour Force Statistics, January 2003

Next week

- Employment & Earnings Trends, January 2003

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